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Children's Advocacy Institute Honors Outstanding Efforts by Legislators, Legislative Staff

Sacramento — The Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI), of the University of San Diego School of Law, today announced the recipients of its 2007 awards for Legislator of the Year, the Children First Award, and Legislative Staff of the Year.

The Legislator of the Year award is presented to a Legislator who during 2007 effectively worked to protect children's interests. "For 2007, CAI is recognizing the outstanding efforts of the Senate President pro Tempore, Don Perata," announced CAI Senior Counsel Ed Howard. "He is our Legislator of the Year because of his successful and effective leadership, despite severe fiscal and political pressures, in crafting and enacting a budget that protected funding sources essential to the future well-being of California's children, as well as his longstanding support of efforts to improve the status of California's children."

The Children First Award is presented to a Legislator who takes political risks on behalf of kids. This may include voting in opposition to party recommendations or taking on controversial or unpopular issues. "CAI had no choice but to honor two legislators with its Children First Award for 2007," noted CAI Executive Director Robert C. Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law at the USD School of Law. "First, we are acknowledging Senator Carole Migden for her courage in authoring and tenacity in fighting for SB 39, a landmark measure that will finally enable the California public to hold state and local government accountable for the deaths of children due to abuse or neglect and, through the reforms that can come only through sunshine, will save the lives of countless abused and neglected children throughout California."

CAI is also presenting the Children First Award to Assemblymember Dave Jones, who has shown a longstanding commitment to author and passionately advocate for legislation that would meaningfully improve the lives of California's children. "Assemblymember Jones consistently puts children's interests ahead of all others — something that each and every legislator should be doing," noted Fellmeth. "He is a loyal and unyielding ally for children, and we greatly appreciate his efforts to stand up for their interests time after time, on issue after issue."

The Staff of the Year Award is presented to legislative staff members whose dedication to children's issues has been exceptional over time, and who put forth exemplary effort in furtherance of legislation that would elevate the status of our state's children. "Four legislative staffers clearly deserved this award for 2007 because of their commitment and hard work leading to the enactment of SB 39 (Migden)," noted Howard. "This groundbreaking measure would not have been enacted without the outstanding efforts of Fredericka McGee, Laura Metune, Gloria Ochoa, and Gene Wong, and we are pleased to honor them as Staff of the Year."

CAI is an academic, research, and advocacy center dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of California's children. CAI advocates in the legislature, in the courts, before administrative agencies, and before the public to improve the status of children. CAI strives to educate Californians about children's needs for economic security, adequate nutrition, health care, education, quality child care, and protection from abuse, neglect, and injury.

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